

Sylvester and Margaret England House  
300 Coleridge Avenue  
Llyswen Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5884

HABS  
PA,  
7-ALTO,  
128-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
SYLVESTER AND MARGARET ENGLAND HOUSE

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Location: 300 Coleridge Ave.

Date of Erection: 1907

Description: This two-and-a-half-story, brick-veneered house is massive by Llyswen standards and unique in its eccentric combination of Neoclassical and Victorian elements. The low-pitched roof is cross-gabled with a modest cornice and brackets, continued across the front gable as a frieze band interrupted by a wide, pedimented window in the attic story. Beneath it is a large window with a rusticated stone segmental arch, and beneath that, under a deep, wraparound porch, is a classical entry with rectangular bevelled- and leaded-glass transom and sidelights, flanked by large cottage windows with bevelled-glass lights above. Other windows have smooth limestone sills and rusticated flat arches. The small rectangular windows above the second-floor windows are unusual; they illuminate third-floor rooms at floor level. The columned porch has a surprisingly delicate balustrade, in relation to the mass of the house. The porch stairs are at the northeast corner, but the house faces Coleridge Avenue.

For all its grand scale, the interior of the house, which includes about fifteen rooms, is surprisingly modest. Woodwork in the more formal front rooms is oak, but the rest of the house is finished in yellow pine stained to simulate the color and graining of finer woods. Mantels in the downstairs parlors are Craftsman-style and scaled to these small rooms, which are separated by a central stair hall. As substantial as the house appears, it is still three stories of brick veneer over a wood balloon frame, with no subfloor. Load-bearing interior walls are not located over corresponding foundation support, so that all the downstairs pocket doors have sagged and no longer slide freely.

History: Sylvester England, purveyor of hardware, roofing, paints, and stoves, paid \$900 for this prestigious corner lot in 1903. The house was built in 1907. City directories indicate England was still living above his store on 6th Avenue that year, but tax records show a house on this lot with a combined assessed value of \$1,500. By 1912 he was listed in the city directory at this address. England also bought the lot directly behind the house, fronting on Whittier Avenue, and had outbuildings there. By 1932 this was the site of a three-car garage. Several local residents recall hearing that England intended the house to become a sanatorium after his residency; the modesty of its interior finish and the floor plan, with many small rooms off central hallways, and the house's rather "institutional" exterior appearance supports this claim, but it could not be documented. J. Clair Hegarty, a coal operator from Coalport, and his wife purchased the property from England in 1919 for an undisclosed sum. During their tenure, the large front room on the third floor often served as a meeting hall for local groups, including chapters of both the Ku Klux Klan and the Daughters of the American Revolution. J. C. died in 1945, but Olga Hegarty, his widow, occupied the house until 1974. The Hegarty's owned a general merchandise store as well, and over the years stored much of their superfluous stock in the house. After Olga's death, the executors of her estate conducted an auction on the front porch that Llyswen residents still talk about. The event went on for several days and included everything from gold coins to boxes of brand new ladies' highbutton boots from the turn of the century. The estate sold the house to the present owner in 1975 for \$20,900.

Sources: Maps: 1909, 1920, 1932, 1951. City directories. Tax records. Deed books: 141/404, 270/270, 485/459, 967/338. Interviews: George and Theresa Rieker, 300 Coleridge Ave., August 12 and 18, 1989. Bob and Leone Schmittle, 211 Coleridge Ave., August 19, 1989. Sara Coon, 312 Coleridge Ave., August 19, 1989.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. An overview of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and an overview of Llyswen (HABS No. PA-5787) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Kathy Edwards in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Edwards's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.